

Broken by martygalwrites

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Summary:

Hopper had gathered them all here in his stuffy little office, all the kids. For an important reason. He shifted his eyes amongst them from behind his desk. What they all had in common was the muddled mix of shame, fear, and exhaustion on their young faces. It was as if they had seen something they shouldn't have. After that thought ran through his mind, he had to remind himself that it was, indeed, a fact. Hopper sighed. They needed to hear this, and they needed to hear it from him rather than someone else.

OR

Hopper talks to the kids about how they have to cooperate with the lab, and obviously they hate that idea. But they kids trust him despite the massive secret he has hiding at home.

Broken

Author's Note:

This has been on my computer for forever so I'm gonna let it see the light of day. Hope you enjoy!!

Hawkins Police Department, January 23, 1984, 3:42 P.M.

"I'm not cooperating with assholes," Lucas muttered, at no one in particular. If you were to ask him, he would tell you that it simply had to be said. The room was still, and you could feel every fiber of it react to his harsh words. The air that surrounded this huddled mass of teenagers was tense enough to make your ears pop like when the pressure shifts on an airplane. It was stale too, and it seemed to show on every face in the room. No one was pleased to be here in the slightest. Will watched the specs of dust softly float in the air, illuminated by the harsh afternoon light coming through the window.

Hopper had gathered them all here in his stuffy little office, all the kids. For an important reason. He shifted his eyes amongst them from behind his desk. Mike Wheeler and his sister Nancy sat near each other to his left. Nancy clutched her school bag, holding on to it for what seemed to be dear life. She looked at him, waiting to hear him speak. Behind her eyes, her mind seemed to be elsewhere – another unpleasant place he supposed. Mike just alternated between staring at his shoes and his hands.

Will Byers sat to Hopper's right, with his brother Jonathan standing over him. Will was still fixated on the dust specs with a mix of childlike wonder and... was that apprehension? Jonathan shifted his weight from his left foot to his right impatiently. He was doing his best to look menacingly protective, although there was nothing for Will to be afraid of. At least not here.

Lucas Sinclair and Dustin Henderson sat in-between, squashed together to make room for everyone. Their usual banter was virtually

nonexistent today, Hopper noted. Even the notorious Steve Harrington was even among the present, although Hopper resented that he had to deal with him altogether. He was on the other side of Nancy to his far left, and was acting as impassive as he could muster.

What they all had in common was the muddled mix of shame, fear, and exhaustion on their young faces. It was as if they had seen something they shouldn't have. After that thought ran through his mind, he had to remind himself that it was, indeed, a fact. Hopper sighed. They needed to hear this, and they needed to hear it from him rather than someone else.

"Watch your language," Hopper finally retaliated. His tone wasn't threatening, though. It was tired. Lucas backed down anyway, sitting back in his metal chair. Hopper continued.

"You're going to have to cooperate with them whether you like it or not," he said.

"Or what?" Dustin retorted.

Leaning forward in his chair, slowing his words, and raising his voice just slightly to make sure he was heard, Hopper replied harshly.

"Or else I'm not going to be able to protect you."

As soon as it left his mouth he regretted saying it, at least in that way. How could he expect any of them to be able to make sense out of this mess? They were all silent, but he had their full and undivided attention now. It was like he could tell that all of their heart rates had accelerated once the room was silent again.

"What I mean to say is, I think we have a pretty good idea of what they're capable of," he pressed on, staring down at the piles of meaningless papers on his desk. "You know, what they're willing to... do."

He paused, to gauge his audience. Tense, fearful, and confused.

"So, you need to just... comply. For me. For your parents. For yourselves. Do you understand?" He paused, waiting for a response, but he found none. "At all?"

Silence. No one was making eye contact with him except for Dustin, who swiftly looked down when he met his eyes.

“Hopper?” This came from Jonathan.

“Yeah,”

“What is it exactly that they’re capable of?”

Lucas swallowed. Mike inhaled sharp enough for it to be heard. Dustin wiped his palms on his jeans. Nancy looked back at him over the top of her brother’s head, her forehead pinched in concern.

Jonathan looked like he regretted the question immediately after asking, but his gaze remained steadily on Hopper.

“Don’t you know?” he added, a little more sheepish this time.

“Look, I...” Hopper started, but then he stopped himself. His intention with this meeting, at first, had been to scare them. He figured Nancy would do as he instructed upon hearing an ultimatum. She had always been a rule follower. She would hopefully get her boyfriend to comply as well, although he was somewhat of a loose cannon. Nancy was now chewing on one of her fingernails and stared at the green shag carpet. Steve was picking at the remains of a scab on his right hand.

Dustin and Lucas, who had come in the room ready to fight Hopper on any suggestion of working in cahoots with the “bad men” had both passively leaned back into their chairs. The four younger boys usually followed after the Wheeler kid, and so Hopper had hoped to get a reaction out of him. Today, the boy was solemn and quiet instead of boisterous and vocal. In fact, Hopper couldn’t remember if Mike had said a word the entire time they had been in the room. His eyes lingered on Mike, watching as he fiddled with his watch, hooking and unhooking the clasp on the back in some sort of nervous habit. He noticed that Mike’s eyes were bloodshot, evidence that he wasn’t getting much sleep these days.

Hell, I know I don’t get much sleep either, Hopper thought. His new addition (the one he promised he would grab a cheeseburger for on

the way home, thank *God*, he'd just remembered) startled awake most nights with rampant nightmares. The only way he knew to calm her down was to read to her out of some of the dusty books from the boxes in the crawl space he always swore he would never touch again. Last night, between her uneven breaths and reaching for a tissue, she had asked. He knew it was coming, and he had been trying his best to prepare an answer although he didn't have one. Hawkins Lab was under new management, and he'd be damned if he wasn't in the middle of every single one of their endeavors from this day forward. But, he had to earn their trust. Then she could leave, then she could see her friends. How on earth do you explain that to a kid?

But she had asked, and it nearly broke his heart into a thousand tiny pieces. He saw the conversation of the night before clearly in his mind, the yellow light of the lamp spreading across the walls of her bedroom as he sat on the chair in a corner with a book in his hands.

"When," she paused. "When can I see my friends?"

He said the very first thing that came to his mind.

"Soon, kid, really soon."

Upon hearing that, she wiped the tears away with a corner of the blanket and had slept easy for the rest of the night. But he hadn't.

With that, he shook off the memory, snapping back to the present. Mike was still incessantly messing with his watch. He almost reminded Hopper of some kind of zombie, like one from *Night of the Living Dead* or something. Just kind of mindless. Going through the motions. Repeating actions over and over and over like a skipping record. It tore at him – it really did – to think he was in some way responsible for that. Even a little bit. That thought kept him up at night even more than the anticipation of another tear-stained nightmare followed by another chapter of *Anne of Green Gables*.

And then, he realized. He didn't need to break these kids to get them to do what he wanted, or even needed them to do. They were already broken. Hopper took his hat off of his head and messed with his hair so it wouldn't stick up in different directions. He leaned foreword on his elbows, drawing himself closer to his timid audience to answer

Jonathan's question.

"I don't know, I really don't," he said. "But, I wouldn't mess with these people. I know you know that. You're smart kids."

He paused. Took a breath.

"They're going to call you into a room, and maybe ask you a few questions. Just tell them the truth. You won't be in trouble. They'll ask you to sign a piece of paper that says you will keep quiet about what you know. Just... sign it, and we can put this entire thing behind us. Isn't that what we all want?"

A few stiff nods around the room, and Hopper was almost positive they got the message. Still no one moved. He heard a small voice to his left, and every head turned to meet it.

"Yep, that's what we want," Mike said.

Author's Note:

Thanks for reading!!

This really has been on my computer for a while, since before S2 came out because I had to go back and make sure it worked with all the new info... I think Hopper definitely felt shitty for keeping El from her friends and vice versa.

But I think I wrote this because I was really interested in exactly how the lab people handled all the leaked info, and how they kept everyone quiet. I have more written on here somewhere, so hopefully I'll get to edit and post those soon!

I'm posting these on Tumblr under the same username @martiegalwrites, if you wanna read over there! Let me know what you think!! :)

-M